

The InterAct

**ICSEW**

Interagency Committee of State Employed Women

July/August 2004

2004 Conference A Success

By Vicki Rummig, ICSEW Chair

On May 17, 2004 over 350 women converged on the

Quinault Beach Resort in Ocean Shores, Washington to attend 3 days' worth of educational and inspirational workshops and presentations, all arranged around the theme of "The Culture Within Us."

Denise Bissonnette had a strong presence at the conference providing an opening speech, breakout workshops, and the second day's keynote address. She talked to the conference delegates about sculpting our own destinies given our culture, our skills, and our interests. Her presentations provided the perfect link between culture and enhancement in our personal and professional lives.



Breakout sessions provided similar links through workshops such as Communicating to Connect by Liv Monroe, Generations in the Workplace by Sara Maxwell, and Deepening Team Culture by Stephanie Howe. Other workshops provided more technical learning opportunities with topics like The Three R's of Wellness by Pat Bartley, Leadership for Women by AnaMaria Diaz Martinez, and Breaking the Glass Ceiling by Sherry Appleton.

With 350 women in 1 location, there had to be some letting down of the hair. Evening meals were accompanied by appropriate entertainment with

Rebel Voices using song to provide a history of working women and Planet Percussion taking us on a world tour of music, percussion, and dance.

In addition to entertainment, there was shopping to be done. The silent auction included over 200 items and raised \$3908 for contribution to the Domestic Violence Center of Grays Harbor. The emotional presentation to Nancy Eichenberger, Executive Director, was, for myself, one of the highlights of the conference.

The conference closed with laughter. Comedian Debbie Wooten had us laughing and crying all at the same time as she used humor to demonstrate how she overcame obstacles and setbacks in her own life. This brought the conference full circle, with the notion of using our experiences, our culture, and our skills to carve out the right life for each one of us.

In summary, you could say that 350 women learned together, sang together, danced together, shopped together, cried together, laughed together, and, finally, shared life experiences that we are not soon going to forget. And, for a final send-off, the Conference Committee gave an impromptu performance of The Spaniels' hit song, "Goodnight, Sweetheart."

--Photos courtesy of Julie Woods, Office of the Governor



Conference Quotes

"Wow, nice job. This was very enjoyable and I felt was well worth my time. I'm so glad my agency and supervisor support diversity training for staff. It was great to come to a multi-day event and soak up all the different training you put together...the only bad part was having to choose from the different workshops. Wish I could have gone to them all."

"This was my first conference and I loved it! Most of the workshops were inspiring or caused me to remember to be myself--very refreshing. It was wonderful to be around so many women and feel so comfortable."

Update From the Chair

A Year Past, A Year Ahead

By Vicki Rummig, ICSEW Chair



July is the month of transition for the ICSEW. Two-year appointments end on June 30, 2004 for nearly half of the current members. New members will be taking their places in July.

We will also see a large turnover on the ICSEW Executive Board. While I will miss working with these women that I have come to respect and count on, I look forward to the exciting opportunities that change can bring.

Before I can think about what the future year will hold for the ICSEW, I think it is important to reflect on what we have accomplished over the past year. One of our goals had been to implement committee process improvements. We have made great strides in this effort including adopting bylaw amendments, meeting guidelines, and establishing new policies and procedures to help guide the administrative operations of the committee while providing flexibility to make updates as leaders and business practices change.

The ICSEW was politically busy this year as well. Members surveyed their agency directors to find out what current issues the ICSEW should be involved in. While many issues were identified, changes to the Personnel System Reform Act (PSRA) consistently came up.

The ICSEW had many presentations on all sides of the PSRA including collective bargaining, competitive contracting, and civil service reform as well as implementation processes and plans for each. Copies of presentations provided to the ICSEW are available on the ICSEW's Web site at <http://www.icsew.wa.gov/events.htm>.

We provided input to the Department of Personnel on proposed changes to compensation law for civil service reform based on a case study the general membership participated in on performance-based pay increases and provided detailed information on

competitive contracting through the *InterAct* newsletter. A copy of the case study is provided on the ICSEW's Web site at <http://www.icsew.wa.gov/cases-tudy.pdf>.

We also had a panel discussion with members from all sides of the PSRA at our conference that was well attended and received. This panel discussion was the first presentation statewide that included representatives from all sides of the PSRA implementation.

This was all in addition to the great number of educational workshops offered throughout the year and at the Biennial Conference held May 17-19, 2004 in Ocean Shores, Washington. The number of state employed women who have benefited from ICSEW-hosted events this year is approximately 600.

Now, as I look forward to the year ahead, I can only see more exciting opportunities for the ICSEW. The committee will need to stay involved in the PSRA to continue to understand and provide the most up-to-date information on personnel rule changes that we will all face.

I look forward to ICSEW members and agency directors helping us to discover new issues and reemphasize the importance of the current issues on our radar as we continue to progress.

Silent Auction A Huge Success

By Joyce Norris, ICSEW Vice Chair

One of the highlights of the ICSEW conference was the silent auction. Items ranged from jewelry to a Harley Davidson leather jacket. Even the decorations were for sale.

As Chair of the Silent Auction Committee, I had the pleasure of presenting a check for \$3908 to Nancy Eichenberger, Executive Director of the Domestic Violence Center of Grays Harbor. I'd like to thank everyone who donated items and those whose bids made this possible.

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Five Tips for Job Change Readiness

By JillXan Donnelly

A recent survey conducted by CareerWomen.com reported the top five reasons women are changing jobs. While the number one reason cited was family obligations, women also move on to new positions to expand opportunities, create higher earning potential, relocate, or because of job burn out.

"A career change doesn't mean that your first choice was a bad one. Every job should be considered an experience and a stepping stone to something else," said JillXan Donnelly, president of CareerWomen.com. "People change and evolve over the course of their lives and it is unrealistic to expect that one career, or one job, will always be satisfying. We've created CareerWomen.com to provide resources that help women prepare for and embrace their life-long career opportunities."

CareerWomen.com polled site visitors and found that 64 percent of women who responded had made a change mid-way through their career.

In response, CareerWomen.com offers five tips for job change readiness:

1. Review, update, and re-write your resume every year. Having a current resume on hand will allow you to quickly respond to opportunities as they present themselves. Consider creating several resumes for a variety of career directions that can be posted in an online database for easy retrieval and sending.

2. Look inside as well as outside. Consider an internal job change if your current position is not meeting your career expectations. Leaving your current employer may not always be the best decision, especially during high unemployment phases. One survey respondent suggests, "be flexible, look for opportunity, and constantly broaden your horizons."

3. Consider challenge and service as criteria. When evaluating new career opportunities, women report being inspired by challenge and service in addition to compensation. Investigate how a new position will

allow opportunities for additional career challenges as well as possibilities to better serve customers, community, or the corporation.

4. Find mentors--one from Mars and another from Venus. Advice from the right mentor can help you locate and manage opportunities. CareerWomen.com viewers report that a male mentor can coach negotiation skills as well as offer networking and advancement opportunities, while a female mentor can offer informal fellowship, guidance within the corporation, motivation, and encouragement.

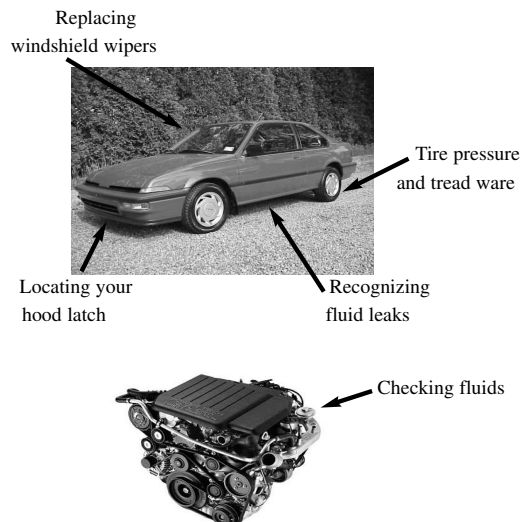
5. Plan for a smooth transition. If you do find a new position, make the transition seamless for your current employer. Clean up messes, offer to train your replacement, be available for questions after your departure, and thank your current employer for the experience. Leaving on a positive note will only enhance your future career options.

--Reprinted with permission from CareerWomen.com

Basic Car Maintenance

By Norma King

On August 24, 2004 the ICSEW will be sponsoring a workshop called "Basic Car Maintenance." Attendees will learn basic automotive essentials such as checking fluid levels, watching for leaks, checking tire pressure, and checking tire tread wear. The instructor, Mr. Patch, has over 27 years experience in the automotive industry, over 5 years experience teaching in higher education, and has achieved his Master Technician Status/Certification through Automotive Service Excellence. The following are examples of items he will be teaching:



Mr. Patch will also cover basic service schedules, such as changing your oil every 3000 miles and checking your oil once per week. This workshop should be fun and interesting. We look forward to your attendance on August 24.

ICSEW Event Information

August 24, 2004 - "Basic Car Maintenance" workshop by Mr. Patch. Workshop is free. Location TBD. Contact Norma King at 360-583-3063 or nking@secstate.wa.gov.



ICSEW CELL PHONE DRIVE Put Your Old Cell Phones to Good Use to Help Save Lives

The ICSEW conducts an ongoing cell phone, rechargeable battery, and cord drive. Cell phones are reprogrammed by Verizon Wireless to dial 9-1-1 and donated to the Washington State Domestic Violence Coalition.

Contact Jan Olmstead (Health Care Authority) at 360-923-2803 or by e-mail at jolm107@hca.wa.gov. If we can help save even one life it is all worthwhile!



Spotlight Article ICSEW Conference Committee

By Janet Merz

The Conference Committee is responsible for planning a conference that provides work skill training, great substance, and excellent value, in addition to fun and relaxation for state employed women. Committee members began meeting 2 1/2 years ago, and, since that time, much has changed. "Sustaining the focus and direction of this rather large and diverse committee through two ICSEW Chairs and various new members has been challenging and very rewarding," said Pat Delaney, Conference Committee Chair.

The most obvious accomplishment is the ICSEW Conference, recently held in Ocean Shores, Washington on May 17-19, 2004. The event, titled, "The Culture Within Us," focused on diversity awareness and communication skills. Conference evaluations (183 returned to date) indicate that participants felt there was great value in the workshops and presentations, and that it was time very well spent.

However, the greatest achievement was the committee's ability to work together to form a strong, bonded team. This team moved through a multitude of large and small tasks, deadlines, and conflicting time commitments with intelligence, grace, and humor. An honest and open approach with each other led to a commitment to quality, resulting in a very positive outcome.

The committee's goal is to provide

relevant training and networking/mentoring opportunities for women employed by the state of Washington. The ICSEW Conference offers a unique opportunity to showcase a particular theme, and every effort was made to screen potential speakers, entertainment, and conference locations for added value.

Further, the ICSEW and the Conference Committee work to add value to our greater community. We supported a variety of state employed women who were awesome and gracious conference speakers, collected toiletries and money for women soldiers, and hired and displayed the work of a local artist and photographer. At the end of the conference, \$3908 in proceeds from the silent auction were donated to the Domestic Violence Center of Grays Harbor.

The Conference Committee has been in existence since 1982 and, interestingly enough, their first conference was also about diversity.

Pat Delaney says, "As I look back over the piles of papers and endless meetings, planning, scheduling, and the variety of troubles and the big time commitment of more hours than any of us had to spare, our biggest success was working together. I think we tried hard to listen to each other, we made sure to value our different strengths throughout the process, we adjusted to adversity, and it led to a most rewarding conference."

Department of Health Urges Men to Take Charge of Their Health

In the United States, cancer is the second leading cause of death among men. The Washington State Department of Health encourages all men to see a healthcare provider for regular checkups.

In 2001, 15,325 men in Washington were diagnosed with cancer and 5563 men died from the disease. Lung, prostate, colorectal, and skin cancers are the most common forms of cancer found in men. Some forms of cancer may be prevented by quitting smoking, limiting alcohol consumption, increasing physical activity, wearing sunscreen, and healthy eating.

Two federal grants totaling \$2.3

million over the next 4 years will be used to encourage men to talk to a doctor about prostate screening and to promote and encourage screening for colorectal cancer. The grants will help the Washington State Comprehensive Cancer Control Program in its work to improve community-based education and health promotion, share scientific expertise, and effectively target at-risk populations.

All men should know their risk of getting cancer and can get information from their doctors on how to reduce that risk. See The American Cancer Society Web site at <http://www.cancer.org/> for more information.

Women Leaders in State Government Paula Hammond, WSDOT

By Joyce Norris, ICSEW Vice Chair

Paula Hammond, PE, is Chief of Staff at the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and has worked at WSDOT for over 25 years. Paula serves as the adjunct to the Secretary, providing day-to-day leadership and oversight of the agency's administration and communications. She recently took time out of her busy schedule to answer some questions for the ICSEW.

You graduated from Oregon State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering. How did you choose that field?

I chose engineering because my brother said it was easy and there were great job opportunities. I found out that he and I had a different definition of "easy." I did come out of high school with strong math and science skills, so that helped. My desire to work in a field that would deliver tangible benefits to the public kept me focused on getting my degree in engineering.

What brought you to the WSDOT?

I was recruited by the WSDOT while at Oregon State. I had also been offered a job by Oregon DOT and several private firms, but wanted to broaden my horizons and work in public service, so I came to Washington.

If you could do anything differently, what would that be?

Looking back, I'd do everything the same. Each job opportunity that came along helped build a foundation for my next move. WSDOT is a great place to work. I have had the good fortune to work with many dedicated professionals over the years who have supported my growth in this agency.

Did it occur to you that you were entering a male dominated field and did that bother you at all?

Yes! Beginning with my first day of class in my freshman year of college. I came from a graduating class of 32 into a college of 16,000 students. Out of the 180 engineering students, 10 were women. It was a lonely feeling, kind of a culture shock. I knew I had to figure out how to succeed in spite of the discomfort I felt.

What do you see as significant changes in the work place over the last 25 years as they pertain to gender?

Women are everywhere. WSDOT

has become more diverse in every way--we're more reflective of the general population, and we're stronger for it.



How do you balance your work and family life?

One day at a time. Juggling is a better way to describe it. With 3 children ages 7, 12, and 15, there are daily schedule issues to work. My husband and I work together to make sure all goes smoothly.

What kind of leadership skills are required as Chief of Staff and how do you combine your personal values and work ethic with these skills to accomplish WSDOT goals and objectives?

I view my job as needing to be on top of activities at WSDOT--knowing enough about everything to be able to contribute/make a decision on something if needed. Skills I use are to support, encourage, clear obstacles, communicate, and a large dose of intuition. My personal values center on integrity. I want every person I come in contact with to feel I have dealt with them in an honest, open, and fair way.

You are obviously an effective leader. Do you perceive a difference in the methods of successful leadership between men and women?

I don't see a difference in successful leaders--men or women. They all have similar traits that I believe are important: interest in making a difference, passion for what they do, good communication skills, and, most importantly, a sense of humor.

What values or philosophies guide your decisions as the Chief of Staff?

As a public servant, I believe our mission is to provide our transportation projects and services in a way that provides the most benefits for the state's citizens. I also believe that through our day-to-day actions each of us can demonstrate our ability to capably deliver projects and services to the public. With that performance record, the confidence in the agency by the decision-makers and the public will continue to build.

The ICSEW would like to thank Paula Hammond for taking time out of her busy schedule to share her insights and job experiences with us.

Lack of Safety Regs Put Female Workers at Risk

By Shaya Tayefe Mohajer,
WeNews Correspondent

The downgrading of Clinton-era ergonomics-safety laws to voluntary guidelines has left workers in the heavily female health care field particularly prone to injury, according to advocates.

Forty-six-year-old Maggie Flanagan used to love her work with newborns. When monitors beeped hundreds of times during a 12-hour shift in the hospital nursery, she responded swiftly, so as not to let the noise damage the ears of her tiny patients.

But every time Flanagan stretched to quickly hit a shoulder-height button to quiet the machine, she unwittingly inched closer to a crippling injury. Combined with a series of other repetitive motions, Flanagan soon began feeling pain in her back, neck, and shoulders that wouldn't go away.

"We're always responding to monitors in health care," the Tacoma, Washington nurse told Women's eNews in a telephone interview. "I knew I was having back strain, but wasn't aware of the subtle signs of repetitive motion injury."

When she was moving a monitor with another nurse, she developed back spasms. She was diagnosed with a cornucopia of back-neck-and-shoulder injuries that put her out of work for 8 months in 1999.

Ergonomic injuries like hers, also known as musculoskeletal disorders, occur more often in the heavily female health care sector than any other industry, according to the most recent statistics from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

Disproportionate Affect on Women

It's a situation that advocates say affects a disproportionate number of women. "One of every nine ergonomic-related injuries occurs in the health care sector, and the health care sector is predominately women," said Bill Borwegen, occupational health and safety director for the 1.6 million members of Service Employees International Union.

Borwegen added that state-funded insurance payments often expire before an employee is able to resume work, compelling the injured to apply for government-funded disability payments. "You and I as taxpayers end up paying for their injuries."

Borwegen argues that many of the injuries would have been prevented by Clinton-era workplace ergonomics

laws that the Bush administration, upon taking office in January 2001, downgraded to voluntary guidelines for employers.

"People are being crippled, they end up losing their jobs," he said in an interview from the union's Washington, DC offices. "Injuries could be dramatically reduced by putting in place good ergonomic programs that require the use of mechanical lifting and transfer devices." Such devices, according to Borwegen, would also benefit patients, making them less likely to be dropped and "less prone to skin tears," which he described as a serious medical hazard.

Depending on Goodwill

Flanagan also believes that voluntary guidelines are inadequate. "Until we get legislation that mandates employers to identify and eliminate hazards then we'll always be dependent on the goodwill of others for our health and safety," the nurse said.

Following her injury in 1999, Flanagan was not only out of work for those difficult 8 months. "When I was injured, I wasn't injured for the duration of my shift alone," Flanagan said. "I was injured 24-7 and my husband basically became a single parent. I couldn't do any of the dressing, bathing, or feeding of my two sons--I couldn't do anything."

Now, she is back at her job, but putting up with relentless pain. "I love my job," she said. "I still do it. I just never thought helping people take such good care of their children would affect how I'd be able to take care of mine. I've grieved for that."

Difficult Data Comparison

After changing the way it gathers and classifies data, the Bureau of Labor Statistics has said that most current statistics on workplace injuries can't be compared to data from before 2001, making it difficult to gauge how United States workplace might have been affected by the lack of ergonomic standards.

Gary Visscher, deputy assistant secretary at OSHA, said the agency is doing what it can to encourage employers to adhere to its safety recommendations.

"In the absence of a standard, we have a very aggressive program and we're working with a lot of different people on addressing ergonomic issues in their own particular workplace." Visscher said that many health care facilities have self-imposed ergonomics standards that conform to official

guidelines.

Visscher said that between 1992 and 2001, musculoskeletal injuries, as a percentage of overall injuries, ranged between 34 and around 35 percent. Currently, he said, the figure stood at 34 percent. "It's certainly not gone up and I think that's an important indicator. We are doing better in total injuries and we're doing better in musculoskeletal disorders."

No Improvement Since 2001

Workers' advocates, however, say that voluntary standards do not appear to be reducing injuries.

"Since 2001 nurses have continued to become injured," said Dr. Butch de Castro, senior staff specialist for occupational health and safety at the Washington, DC-based American Nurses Association. He added that many nurses are leaving the profession "because of exposure to ergonomic hazards in health care settings and that is primarily due to patient lifting or patient handling, which is done manually."

A survey conducted by the American Nurses Association's Web site in 2001 found that of 4286 respondents, 2166 nurses said they "often" continue working despite experiencing back pain, while 1750 said they "sometimes" worked through the pain. The survey also found that a disabling back injury was the second-leading health concern among nurses, ranking higher than AIDS or hepatitis exposure from needle sticks.

And the Bureau of Labor Statistics annual report on injuries in the workplace for 2002, the most recent year for which statistics are available, indicated that 79,007 nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants reported injuries that required days to be taken off from work in 2002. Of those, about 91 percent were women. These workers, according to findings, were second only to truck drivers in the number of injuries reported by vocation. They "predominately suffered sprains and strains to their trunk (typically their back), due to overexertion related to lifting or moving patients."

While not all accidents on the job

are considered preventable, workers' advocates say musculoskeletal disorders can be prevented by proper ergonomic standards. Such injuries accounted for 44,400 of 79,007 total injuries in health care, in 2002. Clinton-era workplace-safety regulations aimed at preventing such injuries went into effect on January 16, 2001, after 10 years of research and drafting. They required 6 million workplaces to educate 102 million workers about the musculoskeletal risks of certain job-related tasks, while mandating businesses to invest in the new equipment, furniture, and practices in instances where injuries were reported.

Compliance costs were estimated by OSHA to reach \$4.5 billion a year while business lobbyists estimated it would cost more than 10 times that much, \$67 billion. Days before leaving office, Clinton signed the new regulations into law. With Bush's pledge of support, the Republican-led Congress in 2001 revoked the regulations.

For more information:

Penney Kome

"New repetitive Strain Rules May Be Challenged"


Women's eNews, January 29, 2001:
<http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm/dyn/aid/421>

American Nurses Association

Workplace Issues: Occupational Safety and Health: <http://www.nursingworld.org/osh/hearing.htm>

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